

ALL HIKERS!

Please take note:

- Stay on established and marked trails only
- Pets must be leashed and under control at all times
- No alcoholic beverages
- Do not disturb wildlife or plant life
- Wear light color clothing and check for ticks after hike
- Learn to identify poison ivy – “Leaflets three, let it be!”
- Take only memories
Leave only footprints!



SUFFOLK
COUNTY
PARKS



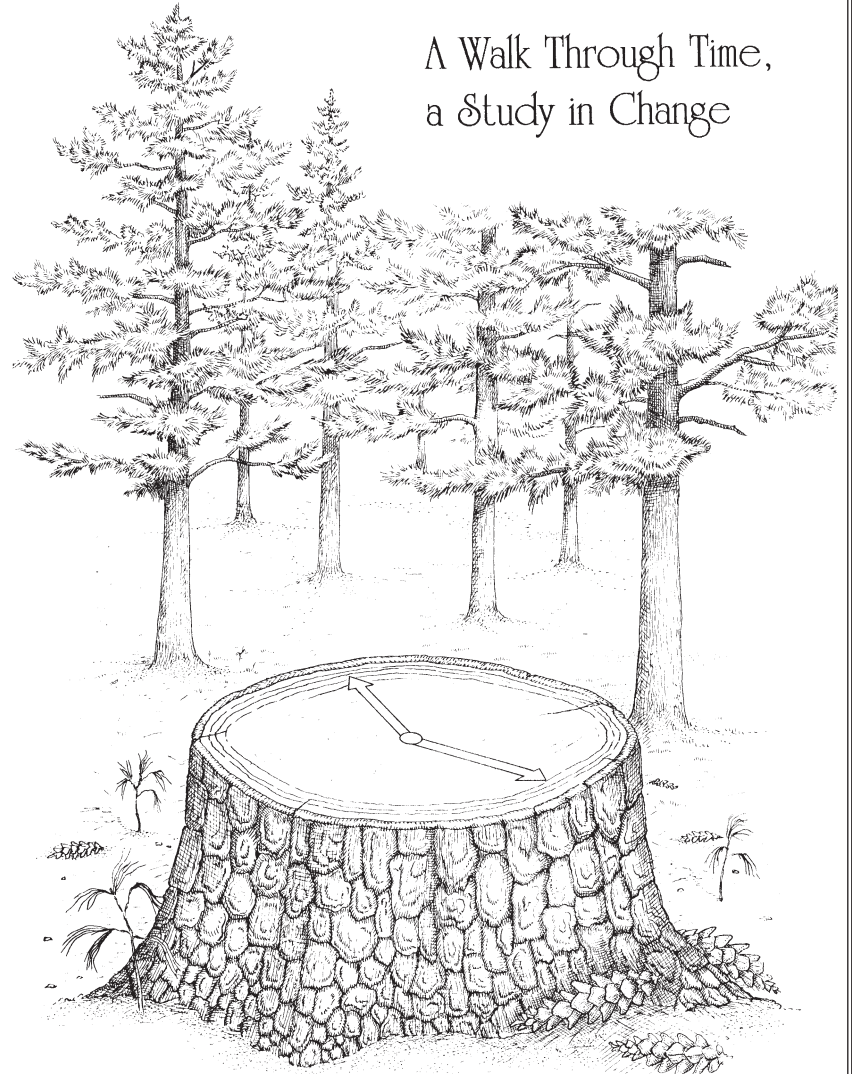
Park Information — (631) 854-4949

Emergencies — 911

Park Police Headquarters — (631) 854-1422

Prosser Pines

*A Walk Through Time,
a Study in Change*



Suffolk County Department of Parks,
Recreation and Conservation

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SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE

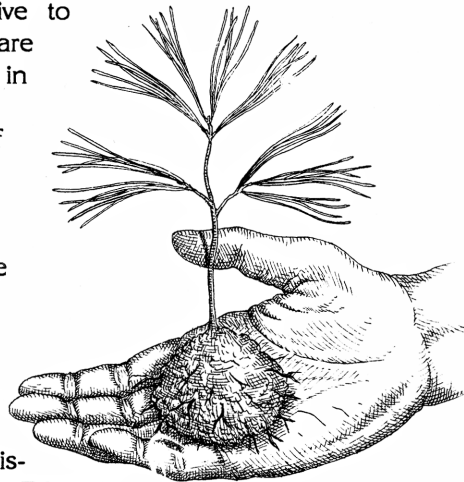
1. Changes in Time

Many people entering this grove of pines feel as though they've entered a region where time stands still. Indeed, you probably won't see evidence here of the world's strife or of its celebrations. The trees live and grow and die; the outside world seems not to intrude. People, too, live and grow and die. Some people's lives are touched greatly by world events, others hardly at all. Consider for a moment how a time line of your own life might reflect major happenings in the world and then ponder what kind of effects outside influences could, indeed, have on this "timeless" grove.

2. The Beginning of the Pines

Perhaps someone in your family once traced your family's roots to find out where your folks came from and what brought them here. Many experts believe that these trees, White Pines, are not native to Long Island. Although there are several groves of these pines in this area, White Pines are more typically found north of Long Island.

Just two men are primarily responsible for this incredible grove here today. One story is that a Jonathan Edwards was an officer in the British army during the French and Indian War. After the fall of Quebec, in 1759, the army disbanded and instead of wages, Edwards received 300 acres of land at Middle Island (actually, a bit north of here). He brought with him some White Pine seedlings from Quebec. Some years later, in 1812, "Uncle Billy" Dayton



of plant and animal life. Shortly after humans made permanent settlements in this area, the woods were cut. This was farmland at the time Dayton first set out the young pines. Although the original native forest here was cleared long ago and we walk now under the boughs of White Pines, we can still spot some remnants of the original forest. Look out for some chestnut sprouts; despite the death of the great American Chestnuts from the chestnut blight years ago, the old roots still try to put out young sprouts.

10. Change and Continuity

The passage of time means changes in the things around us. Sometimes the changes are quick and dramatic such as the cutting of a great forest or trees toppled by hurricanes; other changes seem small at first but leave a great legacy, i.e., the planting of a few tree seedlings or the preservation of land as a county park. Still other changes are necessary to maintain continuity: the death and decomposition of old, dead trees to provide nourishment for the young trees, the competition for sunlight where not all competitors win, and the footprints we leave behind as we follow in the path of those who loved this pine grove before us.

As your family tree grows in the years to come, will the new "branches" come here to wander among this cathedral of pines?



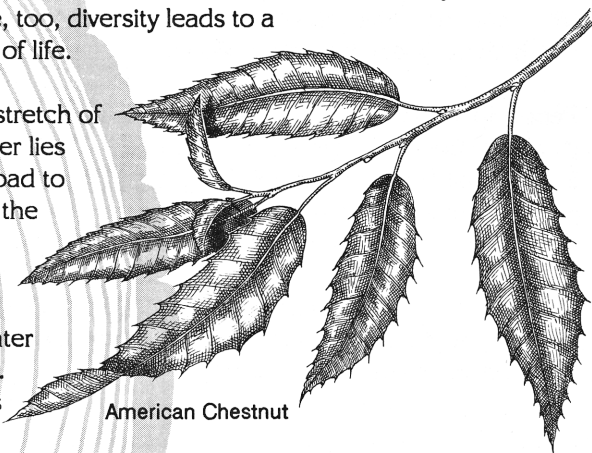
died, how would the story of these pines have been different? Has there been such a key event in your family's history that had a great effect on the future of your family's heritage?

8. A "Damp" Friendship

Perhaps you have a friend whose family roots are quite different from yours, yet those differences enhance the fabric of your friendship. Here, too, diversity leads to a greater richness of life.

The uppermost stretch of the Carmens River lies just across the road to the west. Along the river are wetland areas: areas of moist soil often with standing water after heavy rains. As you enter this wetter neighbor-

American Chestnut



hood, you'll notice less pines and very different vegetation. It becomes apparent that the pines do not care to have their roots quite that wet, yet there are other plants that prefer these conditions. Here you'll find, among other things, some shrubs with sweet-smelling flowers that will not grow in the drier, shadier areas of the central pine grove.

9. The Real Roots

Just as your family's history started long before one of your ancestors first stepped onto this continent, the history of this area goes back beyond 1812 when the first pine seedlings were planted. Oak and chestnut trees probably dominated the original forest of this part of Long Island; here you would have encountered a rich variety

planted some White Pine seedlings (probably obtained from the Edwards farm) here on his farm.

It is fascinating to think that a war far to the north actually led to the existence of the trees that you see here today. And you are surrounded by the evidence that an individual's actions can have great consequences.

The trees thrived and one of Dayton's nephews noted that the grove reminded him of a cathedral. Many people through the years have remarked on the sense of awe they feel walking through these majestic, sweet-smelling trees. And the name has stuck, as this is now part of Cathedral Pines County Park.

3. New Generations

The conditions here in Middle Island seem to be well-suited to White Pines. As Dayton's trees matured, they produced cones and new generations of pines started. In fact, the grove is now considerably larger than the original area that Dayton planted. Perhaps you noticed some pines along the road as you approached the park; not only have the trees reproduced and replaced old trees, but they have spread outward as well. Picture your own family tree: from one particular ancestor, the branches spread outward to many descendants. Notice how in some areas here you can easily see trees of different ages, while in other spots all the trees appear to be the same age. Look for some seedlings of the size that Edwards may have brought from Quebec or that Dayton planted here on his farm many years ago.

4. Head Start for Trees

The roots of these trees are taking nutrients as well as water from the soil. When an old tree dies it slowly gives some of those nutrients back to the soil so that it's children can use them. Dead trees provide both shelter and food to a variety of animals and,

6 ft.

4 ft.

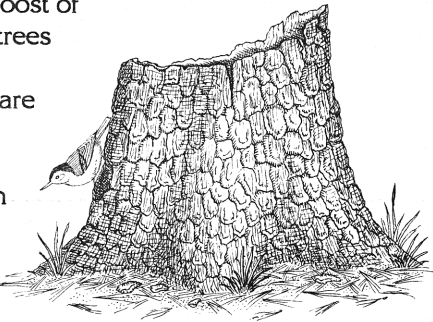
2 ft.



along with fallen branches and needles, become food for many insects, worms, bacteria and fungi. These organisms slowly break down the wood returning nutrients to the soil. Brush aside some of the needles that carpet the forest floor, feel the rich soil and take a close look at it. You can see needles at various stages of decomposition. (Be sure to recover the bare spot you just made.) This is part of the legacy that the young trees inherit from their parents.

5. Storms and Peer Groups

Perhaps you remember a hurricane that knocked down some trees near your home. Here, too, hurricanes have taken their toll of trees. In fact, the original trees that Dayton planted have toppled slowly through the years in a series of hurricanes. When large trees fall, however, the open space they create in the forest canopy gives a boost to any seedling youngsters in the area. Just as human grandparents like to spoil their grandchildren, the sunlight that comes into the openings created by the fall of an old tree provides a boost of energy needed by the young trees and they grow quickly. (On a stump, you can see the rings are more widely spaced when the tree was young.) Often you'll see a patch of young, tall, thin trees all about the same age growing very thickly together. These trees are crowded because a large number of seedlings started to grow in the sunlit opening at about the same time and they are competing for the sunlight. In some sunlit openings, here in the pine grove, you'll also see other kinds of plants that require more sunlight to grow than they'd get in the dark shade of the pines. Watch for some of these sunny openings and see what has moved into the space left by the death of the old trees.



6. A Place to Enjoy

Sometime around the turn of the last century (circa 1900), George Prosser bought this and a number of other parcels of land in the area from the Dayton family. The Prossers took great pride in this pine grove -- it was a wonderful space to wander in and enjoy. For some years, the Prossers permitted people to visit and picnic in the grove; George Prosser put in roads to provide better access and Mrs. Prosser wouldn't allow picnickers to build fires for fear of the pines burning. After hurricanes felled some big trees, a neighbor cut them up and removed the wood.

People lived in this area; people cared for this area; people even drove out from the city to enjoy this area -- all of these people have left their mark in some way in this grove. For example, the ditches you may have noticed (such as the one that parallels this part of the trail) are the remnants of old property lines.

Pause here to enjoy this grove as people have done for over a century. Then, as you proceed along the trail, keep an eye out for other evidences of human activity.

7. Open Space Forever

Although the Prossers certainly cared deeply for this majestic pine grove, by 1940 several people had already proposed the idea of Suffolk County purchasing the plot. After World War II, large numbers of people including several garden clubs, the Suffolk County Taxpayers Association and the Long Island Association attempted to persuade the County to preserve the area as a park. However, there was, as yet, no county parks commission. Finally, in 1968 Suffolk County acquired Prosser Pines from Mrs. Prosser and the future of the grove was assured.

All through those years people spoke about this "unique cathedral of nature" that future residents of Suffolk County should be able to enjoy. Had Suffolk not purchased this land before Mrs. Prosser